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AUTHOR Cobb, William, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

The principal objectives of this paper were to identify variations in the quality of a worker's employment in explaining the sources of job satisfaction and their applicability to subsamples of the workforce. More importantly, utilizing racially distinct subsamples allowed for the results to suggest which of two traditional approaches for predicting the attitudes of black workers was more likely to be appropriate. Within a "personality-deficit" approach to the understanding of black workers, little correspondence was expected between measures of Quality of Employment and measures of Job Satisfaction. The associations between these two measures were expected to be lower among black than among white workers. A social systems approach, however, predicted a more direct relationship between working conditions and job attitudes. It was expected that among black workers, one's job satisfaction would correspond to the amount of his or her Quality of Employment and that there would be no difference between the races in the associations between Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction. With regard to overall Job Satisfaction and Quality of Employment, the results provided no support for a "personality-deficit" approach. The findings indicated that the lower Job Satisfaction of black workers paralleled their poorer Quality of Employment. For both black and white workers Quality of Employment explained a substantial amount of the variance in Job Satisfaction scores. (Author)

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS *

William Cobb, Jr.

Survey Research Center
The University of Michigan

While job satisfaction or dissatisfaction represents an attitude regarding a job that arises in part from the working conditions associated with it, subjective responses to the work situation make up only a portion of the variance in experienced job satisfaction. Seashore (1972) notes that a complete understanding of job satisfaction requires a consideration of at least three other factors: that portion of job satisfaction attributable to relatively stable demographic and personality attributes; that portion attributable to changing demographic and personality attributes; and that portion representing measurement error. An adequate definition of job satisfaction is further complicated by the fact that job satisfaction is a dynamic rather than a static process and may change from day to day in response to changes in the work environment.

Much of the analysis of the 1969-70 Survey of Working Conditions was directed at determining the relationship between job satisfaction and various objective aspects of work. Chapter 9 showed that 53 percent of the variance in job satisfaction as measured was "explained" by workers' reports of their quality of employment. Chapter 13 showed, furthermore, that demographic and occupational characteristics provided relatively poor predictors of job satisfaction when more direct measures of quality of employment were available. Based on the notion that

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individuals of different educational attainments or of different degrees of economic need might respond differently when exposed to the same objective conditions, this chapter examines differences in expressed levels of job satisfaction between two subsamples of the work force who may be expected to experience quite different types of working conditions.

Recognizing the importance of identifying variations in quality of employment in explaining the sources of job satisfaction and the need to consider the extent to which such explanations are equally applicable to all subsamples of the work force, this chapter focuses on differences between black and white employed workers in aspects of their work and the relationships of these differences to differences in their levels of job satisfaction. By utilizing subsamples of black and white workers, this chapter also focuses on some current issues concerning the motivation of black workers. In an attempt to integrate seemingly divergent approaches in past research on and speculations about the motivation of blacks in general and about the black worker specifically, current approaches suggest that a consideration of black workers' subjective responses to realistic constraints in their job environments may be an important factor, if not the most important factor in leading to a more adequate explanation of the attitudes and behaviors of black workers.

This investigator has reviewed elsewhere traditional assumptions concerning the determinants of black workers' attitudes and behaviors as well as more recent attempts to reconcile the theoretical limitations of these earlier assumptions (Cobb, 1972). Traditional theories of the motivational determinants of black workers and blacks in general typically have adopted one of two seemingly divergent approaches. A "personality deficit" approach is based on personality characteristics presumed

to exist within either the black race or contemporary black society. Within this framework, studies of the black worker typically emphasize attitudinal differences between black and white workers in relation to selected aspects of their jobs. These results for the most part have been interpreted in terms of differences in personality structure between blacks and whites, such as: the presumed unimportance of intrinsic motivators among black workers (Bloom & Barry, 1968); suggested differences in need structures of blacks and whites (Slocum & Strawser, 1971); lack of suitable male models among blacks for appropriate role behavior (Himes, 1964); and values presumed to be held within the black community (Dizard, 1968). With the personality deficit approach, it is assumed that similar working conditions have different effects on black and white workers due to personality differences between the two races.

Another, and often theoretically distinct, set of hypotheses focuses on institutional and social system constraints that deny blacks access to suitable jobs. Studies adopting this approach have utilized comparative statistics concerning black and white employment and unemployment to emphasize the disproportionate number of blacks in low status jobs (Fein, 1964; Bennett, 1972), and the complicating effects of demographic variables such as education and age (Heistand, 1970). Despite its relevance to the theoretical literature as a contending explanation for the attitudes and behavior of black workers, few of these comparative studies have examined the more basic question of the relationship between observed differences in the objective aspects of work and their relationship to job attitudes and performance. Such studies typically assume that working conditions have similar effects on both black

and white workers, and that racial variations in job relevant attitudes or behavior stem from different experiences with one or more objective aspects of work.

While individual differences in job satisfaction have been interpreted both in terms of the personal characteristics of workers and in terms of the quality of employment presumed to be experienced by them, parallel studies utilizing black and white samples have provided little information concerning the effects of observed differences in personality or working conditions on job attitudes or performance.

Current attempts to reconcile divergent theories concerning the determinants of the attitudes and behavior of the black worker emphasize the importance of considering in more detail potential differences between black and white workers in their subjective responses to objective conditions of work. Reconsiderations of these traditional approaches suggest that a more complete understanding of the determinants of the attitudes and behavior of black and lower status workers is obtained by integrating these previously divergent approaches within the framework of expectancy theory (Cobb, 1972; Gurin & Gurin, 1970; and Gurin et al., 1969). Expectancy theory as applied to lower status workers focuses primarily on issues of stability and generalizability of change in subjective probabilities of success. It rests on the assumption that effort, performance, and satisfaction are based in part on one's level of freedom from both personal and situational constraints and the observation that black workers, specifically, are faced with the operation of very real constraints in their objective conditions. Applications of expectancy theory to black workers have, however, been limited by a number of factors (Cobb, 1972). The limitation most pertinent to this chapter is

that most expectancy theory applications utilize the assessment of one's overall probability of success. If, in fact, constraints in the work environment play an important role in influencing worker attitudes, it would seem helpful to consider one's subjective responses to specific components of the work environment to determine their differential effects on one's level of expectancy.

Based on these considerations and the lack of previous research in this area, this analysis was guided by two overall objectives. The first objective was concerned with issues drawn from comparative studies of black and white workers that point to discrepancies between races in various job-related areas. Initially, an attempt was made to determine the extent to which previously suggested occupational discrepancies between black and white workers were reflected in the present sample. Utilizing quality of employment indicators (see Chapter 9) it was expected that if, in fact, discrepancies did exist between black and white workers on individual quality of employment indicators, black workers would generally experience lower quality of employment than white workers.

While establishing that black workers may or may not differ from white workers in their experience of quality of employment and job satisfaction, such results say little about the more important question of racial differences in the associations between these two components. The second objective of this chapter was, therefore, to determine whether black and white workers differed in the extent to which their experience of quality of employment was associated with their job satisfaction. The strength of the association between the quality of one's employment and job satisfaction among black and white workers was

expected to depend on which particular approach more adequately described the attitudes of black workers. Within the framework of a personality-deficit approach, it was expected that there would be significantly less association between the quality of employment and job satisfaction among black workers than among white workers. Conversely, a social system approach would predict no differences between the two races in the strength of the associations between quality of employment and job satisfaction.

## Methods

The analysis was confined to the survey's 1,327 wage-and-salaried workers. The major measures were overall job satisfaction, assessed by Facet-free Job Satisfaction (Chapter 5); a measure of the overall Quality of Employment; the four Quality of Employment indices--Comfort, Challenge, Financial Rewards, and Resource Adequacy (Chapter 9); and the four analogous job satisfaction indices (Chapter 5).

## Results

### Differences between black and white workers in Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction

Table 18.1 shows that on the whole, white workers experienced better Quality of Employment than black workers. In each general aspect of work, with the exception of Resource Adequacy, the Quality of Employment mean scores of whites were higher than those of blacks. On two Quality of Employment measures, Challenge and Financial Rewards, these differences in means were significant beyond the .001 level.

Table 18.1 also shows that on each Job Satisfaction measure white workers were more satisfied than black ones. On the overall job

Table 18.1

Mean Scores of Black and White Workers on Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction Indices

| Index | Black (N=148) | White (N=1,162) | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quality of Employment | | | |
| Comfort | 3.92 | 3.98 | 1.67 |
| Challenge | 3.36 | 3.72 | 6.37*** |
| Financial Rewards | 3.98 | 4.12 | 3.89*** |
| Resource Adequacy | 4.48 | 4.43 | 0.80 |
| Overall | 3.80 | 3.97 | 5.67*** |
| Job Satisfaction | | | |
| Comfort | 3.05 | 3.17 | 2.35* |
| Challenge | 2.99 | 3.23 | 4.25*** |
| Financial Rewards | 2.93 | 3.07 | 1.94 |
| Resource Adequacy | 3.36 | 3.44 | 1.57 |
| Overall (Facet-free Job Satisfaction) | 3.30 | 3.76 | 5.02*** |

*$p < .05$

***$p < .001$

satisfaction index (Facet-free) the difference in mean scores between the races was significant beyond the .001 level. With regard to the separate aspects of satisfaction, white workers were significantly more satisfied than black workers with Comfort ($p < .05$) and Challenge ($p < .001$) aspects of their work. The difference in the Financial Rewards means was slightly below the lowest acceptable level of significance.

Associations between Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction

A social systems approach to attitudinal differences between black and white workers would lead to a straightforward prediction about the results in Table 18.1. For each job aspect where there was a racial difference in quality of employment, there would be a corresponding difference in job satisfaction; where there were no differences in the former, there would be no difference in the latter. The data indicate that black workers experienced lower overall Quality of Employment than white workers and that this was accompanied by significantly lower overall satisfaction among black than white workers.

With regard to the four job aspects, parallel Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction differences (or lack of same) were observed for both Challenge and Resource Adequacy. Blacks not only had less challenging work environments than whites but also were less satisfied than whites with the Challenge aspects of their jobs. Of the twelve facets comprising the Challenge Quality of Employment index, eight differentiated ($p < .001$) between the races (Table 18.2). With regard to Resource Adequacy the races differed neither on the Quality of Employment measure (Table 18.1) nor on any of its components (Table 18.2); they

Table 18.2

Mean Scores of Black and White Workers on Specific Quality of Employment Facets

| Quality of Employment Facet | Black (N=148) | White (N=1,162) | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| Comfort | | | |
| Worker had no problems with his or her hours, work schedule, or with working overtime | 4.35 | 4.27 | .74 |
| Worker had no problems with transportation to and from work | 3.99 | 4.10 | 1.00 |
| Worker did not work excessive hours | 4.70 | 4.52 | 1.49 |
| The physical conditions of worker's job were pleasant and comfortable | 4.01 | 4.19 | 1.04 |
| Worker did not experience dangerous or unhealthy conditions on his or her job | 4.22 | 4.25 | .28 |
| Worker had enough time to do what was expected of him or her | 4.08 | 4.06 | .08 |
| Worker's job did not require that he or she work very fast | 2.52 | 2.37 | 1.22 |
| Worker did not take much time to get to work | 3.11 | 3.62 | 4.38*** |
| Worker mostly determined whether he or she would work overtime on his or her job | 2.84 | 3.44 | 4.45*** |
| Worker's job did not require that he or she work very hard | 2.52 | 2.24 | 2.33* |
| Worker's supervisor did not insist that those under him or her work hard | 2.46 | 2.21 | 2.08* |
| Challenge | | | |
| Worker's job did not prevent him or her from using skills he or she would like to be using. | 3.76 | 3.89 | .85 |
| Worker had enough authority to tell others what to do | 4.02 | 4.05 | .17 |
| Worker's supervisor let his or her subordinates alone unless they asked for help | 4.28 | 4.35 | .68 |

Table 18.2 (continued)

| Quality of Employment Facet | Black (N=148) | White (N=1,162) | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| Worker's employer made available to him or her a training program for improving his or her skills | 2.56 | 2.58 | .09 |
| Worker's job involved doing a variety of things | 3.20 | 3.98 | 5.56*** |
| Worker's job allowed freedom as to how to do his or her work | 3.37 | 3.85 | 3.80*** |
| Worker's job allowed him or her to make a lot of decisions on his or her own | 3.31 | 3.74 | 3.30*** |
| Worker's job required learning new things | 3.17 | 3.81 | 4.95*** |
| Worker's job required that he or she be creative | 2.40 | 2.94 | 3.62*** |
| Worker's supervisor encouraged new ways of working | 3.39 | 3.73 | 2.53** |
| Worker had exactly the education his or her job required | 2.84 | 3.28 | 2.13** |
| Worker's job required high level of skill | 3.07 | 3.77 | 5.69*** |
| Financial Rewards | | | |
| It was unlikely that worker's job would be automated | 4.42 | 4.54 | 1.56 |
| It would be easy for worker to find a new job as good as his or her present one | 3.03 | 3.23 | 1.39 |
| Worker desired no additional fringe benefits | 2.60 | 2.75 | 1.36 |
| Worker's employer made many fringe benefits available to him or her | 3.83 | 3.95 | 1.01 |
| Worker was a full-time worker who received a high income from his or her job | 2.41 | 2.95 | 4.12*** |

Table 18.2 (continued)

| Quality of Employment Facet | Black (N=148) | White (N=1,162) | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| Resources | | | |
| Worker had enough facts and information to do his or her job well | 4.38 | 4.29 | .69 |
| Worker had enough help from others with whom he or she worked | 4.22 | 4.21 | .07 |
| Worker had enough machinery and equipment to do his or her job well | 4.37 | 4.28 | .70 |
| Worker's supervisor knew his or her own job well | 4.41 | 4.52 | 1.17 |
| Worker's supervisor maintained high standards in his or her work | 4.28 | 4.39 | 1.10 |

$^{*}p < .05$

$^{**}p < .01$

$^{***}p < .001$

also did not differ in satisfaction with Resource Adequacy.

While on the Comfort measure there was a significant overall racial difference in Job Satisfaction, there was none with regard to Quality of Employment (at least when a two-tailed significance test was used). According to the presentation in Table 18.2 of the eleven Comfort components, blacks differed from whites on four of the components. Black workers were exposed to significantly fewer demands than whites, both in general and from their supervisors in particular, while white workers reported having more time to get their work done and better opportunities to determine their own overtime. These differences suggest qualitative distinctions between the working environments of blacks and whites with regard to the Comfort facets embodied in the Comfort measure. These differences washed out, however, when total Comfort scores were computed for the two subsamples. The significantly less satisfaction with Comfort expressed by black workers may conceivably be explained in terms of these qualitative differences.

The discrepancy between racial differences in Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction with regard to Financial Rewards was the opposite of what it was for Comfort. Although blacks experienced poorer overall Quality of Employment than whites in financial matters (Table 18.1), especially with regard to income level (Table 18.2), the races did not differ in their satisfaction with the financial facets of their jobs.

The association between Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction for the two races can also be examined correlationally. These correlations are presented in Table 18.3

The most important finding in Table 18.1 was substantiated by the correlations in Table 18.3: that racial differences in overall job

Table 18.3

Product-Moment Correlations Between Quality of Employment Indicators and Comparable Job Satisfaction Indices for Black and White Workers

| Indicator | Black (N=148) | White (N=1,162) | $t$ value of difference between correlations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Comfort | .47*** | .34*** | 1.79 |
| Challenge | .41*** | .63*** | 3.51*** |
| Financial Rewards | .16 | .36*** | 2.61** |
| Resource Adequacy | .56*** | .54*** | 0.33 |
| Overall | .60***[a] | .61***[a] | .19 |
| | .67***[b] | .51***[b] | 1.09 |

[a]Jobsat '72 was the job satisfaction measure used.

[b]Facet-free job satisfaction was the job satisfaction measure used.

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

satisfaction paralleled racial differences in overall Quality of Employment. According to Table 18.3, for both black and white workers, Quality of Employment explained 36 percent of the variance in job satisfaction.*

Significant differences were observed between blacks and whites in the correlation between Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction with regard to both Challenge and Financial Rewards. Previous investigators have suggested that black workers differ from white workers in Challenge-related attributes, either in terms of the salience to them of intrinsic motivators (Bloom & Barry, 1968) or in terms of other aspects of their need structures (Slocum & Strawser, 1971). These differences are somehow presumed to moderate blacks' responses to the Challenge provided them by their work. Their satisfaction with Challenge is therefore not presumed to reflect their realities of how much Challenge their jobs actually offer (or fail to offer) them. Table 18.1 clearly showed that blacks had less challenging jobs than whites and were correspondingly less satisfied with the amount of Challenge their jobs provided. The correlations in Table 18.3 indicated that, although there was a significant difference between blacks and whites in the amount of association between Quality of Employment Challenge indicators and satisfaction with Challenge, the relevant correlation among blacks was nevertheless substantial (.41).

The other significant difference in Table 18.3 bears out what was already suggested by Table 18.1: racial differences in satisfaction with Financial Rewards were rather weakly related to differences between the races in terms of the Financial Rewards that they actually received.

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*See Chapter 9 for similar estimates generated by alternative statistical procedures.

Blacks received fewer such rewards than whites, but they were not significantly less satisfied than whites with these rewards (Table 18.1).

## Discussion

The principal objectives of this chapter were to identify variations in the quality of a worker's employment in explaining the sources of job satisfaction and their applicability to subsamples of the workforce. More importantly, utilizing racially distinct subsamples allowed for the results to suggest which of two traditional approaches for predicting the attitudes of black workers was more likely to be appropriate. Within a "personality-deficit" approach to the understanding of black workers, little correspondence was expected between measures of Quality of Employment and measures of Job Satisfaction. The associations between these two measures were expected to be lower among black than among white workers. A social systems approach, however, predicted a more direct relationship between working conditions and job attitudes. It was expected that among black workers, one's job satisfaction would correspond to the amount of his or her Quality of Employment and that there would be no difference between the races in the associations between Quality of Employment and Job Satisfaction

With regard to <u>overall</u> Job Satisfaction and Quality of Employment, the results provided no support for a "personality-deficit" approach. The findings indicated that the lower Job Satisfaction of black workers paralleled their poorer Quality of Employment. For both black and white workers Quality of Employment explained a substantial amount of the variance in Job Satisfaction scores.

The findings also supported a social systems approach with regard

to Challenge-related aspects of work. While previous studies have suggested that black workers may be less concerned than white ones with having challenging work, the results of this analysis showed that, despite their poorer Quality of Employment and lower Job Satisfaction in this regard, the association between these two Challenge-related components was nevertheless substantial.

Tending more in support of the "personality-deficit" approach, however, were the data with regard to Financial Rewards. Although blacks received fewer such rewards than did whites, they were not, as a result, any less satisfied than whites in this regard. This discrepancy may conceivably have resulted from blacks' scaling-down of their definition of what "good" financial rewards were in light of what was realistically available to them. An equally plausible explanation lies in blacks' choices of reference groups in wage comparisons. According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Pettigrew, 1967), satisfaction with financial rewards may be contingent in part on one's sense of deprivation of these rewards relative to the amount of rewards received by a particular comparison group. If a black worker chooses other black workers as a comparison group, and this group is less well paid than whites, the black worker may be relatively more satisfied than a white worker receiving the same Financial Rewards. The difficulty with the latter explanation, however, is that, if it is valid for financial rewards, why does not the same phenomenon occur with regard to other aspects of the job as well? Why were not the findings with regard to Challenge similar to those with regard to Financial Rewards? Part of the explanation may be in the relatively greater tangibility of the Financial Rewards. Both expectancy theory and equity theory have tended to

concentrate on more tangible rewards. Perhaps they are less applicable to rewards the value of which can less easily be judged (e.g., the amount of challenge a job provides). Such difficulty in value assessment could conceivably render a worker's calculus of satisfaction so subtle and complicated that it is beyond the grasp of either theory in its currently primitive stage.

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